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# How to lead Millennials: Human Resource Practices and Generation Y

Ludovica Di Silvestre, No 2914

A Project carried out on Human Resource Management area, under the supervision of:

Professor. Filipa Castanheira

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## **ABSTRACT**

How to lead Millennials: Human Resource practices and Generation Y. This work project is a literature review, which covers current studies (theoretical), on the main characteristics of Millennials Generation and discusses the best human resources practices to deal with younger generations.

**KEY WORDS:** Millennials, workplace, HRM practices, diversity management

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of the work project is to understand how human resource practices need to be developed in order to value Millennial Generation.

This work project is a literature review that aims to provide an overview and an analysis of all the most important theories about the topic.

Nowadays, composition of workforce is changing significantly due to the rapid growth of a new Generation: the Millennials. Human resource management need to design strategies based on the perspectives of this new potential employees.

In our analysis we develop three main topics: 1) description of Millennials characteristics and behaviors 2) how human resources practices need to be used to engage and value Millennials 3) the challenge of generational diversity within the organization.

For each of this topics, we show an analysis and synthesis of expert's theories currently available, in order to provide potential guidelines to hr. managers inside the organizations.

## **2. METHODOLOGY:**

The aim of this project is to collect and analyze different theoretical studies on Millennial Generation and which Human Resource are mostly appropriate to lead this generation. These studies were acknowledged through several online databases such as B-On, Emerald, Google Scholar, Nova Discovery, SAGE Journals, Scopus, and Springer. To access the literature the following key words were used: Millennials, Generation Y, personality traits, Digital Natives, learning style, workplace, work-life balance, human resource practices, attracting and retaining, recruiting, training and development, mentoring, feedback, organizational impacts, diversity management and generational gap. For the first part of the study, dedicated on Millennials' characteristics and features, the search was focused on academic articles available in several Journal

such as *Sage Journals online*, *Business and Psychology Journals*, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* and so on.

Regarding the second part related to Human Resource Practices, we extended the search to academic books, such as *McGraw Hill*, and nonacademic resources, as *Forbes*, since the few articles available.

Journals and books selected for the research are focused on three disciplines: human resource management, psychology and business-management. The great majority of the articles selected for this work project are recently published due to the fact that the topic of Millennials is new in literature.

Furthermore this work project includes graphs, charts and table to improve the understandability of concepts and numbers.

### 3. MILLENNIALS GENERATION

#### 3.1 DEFINITIONS

Recently, “Millennials Generation” has been subject of discussion due to the vast theoretical resources related to the topic (Deal, Altman & Rogelberg, 2010). The term **Millennials** denotes those people born between the early 1980s to the early 2000s (Loundin, 2013), making them the youngest generation in the actual work-market. In 2015, this generation increased dramatically, becoming the largest in the United States work-force (Pew Research Center, 2015)

Millennials’ identity was shaped by **several events** such as globalization, communication, rise of technology, terrorist attacks, U.S. wars in Middle East, financial markets crisis and subsequent recession. Millennials are typically portrayed as the “Peter Pan generation” or the “**Boomerang Generation**” (Loundin, 2013). In fact, they postpone living independently, staying with their parents for long due to high cost of housing and student debt loan. Millennial are: “**entitled**,

**optimistic, civic minded, close parental involvement, value work life balance, impatient, multitasking and team oriented**” (DeVaney, 2015, p13). They are liberal about social issues such as same sex marriage and diversity, creative and flexible in their work life. On the other hand, Millennials are **negatively labeled** as the “Look at me Generation”, implying that they are excessively self-confident and selfish, lacking in loyalty and work ethic (Marston, 2009). They seem to have a constant need of recognition and appreciation, but are more educated, liberal and flexible than their parents. Twenge and Campbell (2003), stated that compared to the previous generation, they have showed positivism, self-esteem, assertiveness and at the same time negative traits, such as narcissism. This selfish behavior usually evolves in aggressiveness when young people feel to be rejected by the others (Twenge & Campbell, 2003).

Millennial are the most **diversified generation** in the history in terms of race and ethnicity and it is referred to them as the Melting Pot Generation (Nielsen, 2014). According to the Nielsen Report 2014, among Millennials, Hispanic population is expected to grow by 167 % by 2050, followed by Asians with 147% by 2050. Generally, Millennials are more tolerant with the different ethnicities and races, and they are keen on improve minorities conditions.

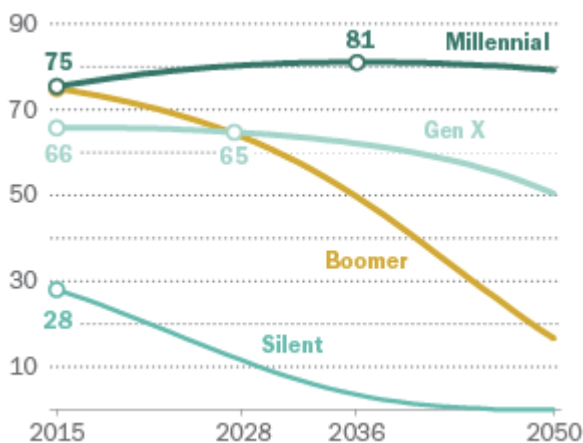
Moreover they are addressed as “**Digital Natives**” (Prensky, 2001), being the first generation that have experienced the advent of computers and digital media (Gorman, 2004; Raines, 2002). Junco and Mastrodicasa (2007) found out that among 770 individuals, 97% had a computer, 94% owned a cell phone, 76% utilized instant messaging, and 34% stated that Internet is the main tool to source for news.

### **3.2 MILLENIALS AND THE PREVIOUS GENERATIONS**

Social Scientists highlighted the existence of four main generational cohorts: “Silent Generation”, “Baby-Boomers”, “Generation X” and “Generation Y”, also known as the “Millennial Generation” (Geoffrey & Schewe, 1994; Strauss & Howe, 1991). Parents of the Boomers (Lehto, Jang, Achana & O’ Leary, 2006), “**Silents**” were represented by people born between 1930-1945 (DeVaney,

2015) during Great Depression and Second World War which caused them great instability. Their main concerns were safety and wealth, being very respectful of the authority.

Defined as “**Boomers**”, due to the explosion in their births from 1946 to 1964, this generation was the one who expected great entitlement and civil rights from the institutions (Kupperschmidt, 2000). They were optimistic and hardworking, supported by a government that guaranteed them education and social protection. “**Gen X-ers**” (Oblinger, 2003), “born roughly between 1961 and 1981” (O’Bannon, 2001, p.95), grew up with financial and societal insecurity that lead to a sense of individualism over collectivism (Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998). They were described as self-reliant and cynical, being the first generation who mature the idea of work to live, not live to work. According to US Census Bureau’s estimates the actual number of Millennials (75, 4 Millions) is overtaking Baby Boomers’ one (74, 9 Millions), instead Generation X is expected to exceed the Boomers by 2028 (Pew Research Center, 2015).



**Graph I: Projected Population by generation in Millions** (Pew Research Center, 2015)

Millennials **traits and attitudes** differ notably from the previous generation. Compared to Gen-Xers, Millennials are more optimistic and less cynical, trusting in the authority and traditions. Baby Boomers are described as workaholic and competitive, on the contrary Millennials like having a work-life balance and being team-players. Even if Generation Y is civic minded and respectful of the authority, they are less conformist and have more liberal view than Silent Generation.



As the generation's traits and features have been changing over the centuries, many empirical studies have been studying if also values and attitudes are evolving on the same path. Recently, researchers found that young generations give less importance to **work** for their well-being (Twenge, 2010), in fact its centrality is declining within the generations (Smola, Sutton 2002, (Twenge, 2010). Generation X and Millennials have less interest in work than Baby Boomers, appreciating more values as freedom and leisure time than work ethic, considering their job not a priority but a way to make to live (Twenge, 2010) . On the contrary, for Baby-Boomers Generation work was a central part of the life.

Smola and Sutton (2002) empirical research stated that **work values** change with the times and consequently with generation. These changes are due mostly to experience, environment and social conditions than to a maturation of the individuals. Younger generations' desires are quick promotions and high salaries. Within the years, there has been a decline in work values, such as less sense of pride in one's work and more doubts about the fact that there is connection between an individual's job and his worth as a person.

The advent of **technology** has impacted society and generations. Baby-Boomers lived in the era of the technology, since they experienced for the first time the benefits of technology innovations such as radio, television and Internet. "Millennials use technology differently than previous generations" (Deal, Altman & Rogelberg 2010, p. 192). In fact, nowadays Technology is such intrinsic in Millennials daily life, to be not only a mere communication tool, a source of information and entertainment but a real symbol of generational identification (Pew Research Center, 2010).

### **3.3 THE INLUENCE OF TECHONOLOGY ON MILLENIALS' CULTURE**

Technology is one of the major differentiation factor between Millennials and the previous generations. Many authors defined Millennials as the internet generation: Prensky (2001), formulated the term "Digital Natives", Tapscott (1997) "Net generation". These terms are all used in order to describe a generation who grow up with digital technologies and use internet as primary

source of information and as a tool to share knowledge. Young generation have strict control of their media environment, **empowering** themselves in it, “(re)constructing the nature, pace and timing of learning events as they wish” (Selwyn, 2009, p. 367). Their **multi-tasking** behavior is one of the reason why they use a large variety of media tools. (Geraci & Nady 2012).For instance instant messaging allows young people to have many conversations at the same time. The use of those media depends on functional, situational, and personal factor (Groebel, 1997) which are used for different purposes. McQuail (1983), stated there are four main **drivers of media and other technologies’** utilization: information (learning), personal identity (look for model of behaviors), entertainment (relaxation), integration and social interaction (acquire sense of belonging).

Which digital devices do own or use?		
Devices	Personally own (%)	Do not own, but do use (%)
Computer	85	14
Video Game Console	60	14
Cell Phone	54	25
Digital Camera	35	26
Game boy/Advance	34	10
Digital Cable TV	32	18
SMS	32	8
Digital Music Player	28	11
Pay per view	22	12

**Table I: Digital devices owned and used** (Geraci &Nady, 2012)

An empirical study conducted by Professor Kilian, University of Koblenz-Landau, Institute of Management, and Professors Hennings and Langner , University of Hannover, Institute of Marketing and Management, found out that the Digital Natives are not an homogenous cluster of

people regarding **social media<sup>1</sup>'s usage**. In fact they distinguish among: “Restrained Millennials”, who are not heavy users of social media (both in an active and passive way), “Entertainment seeking Millennials” who are defined as passive users of blogs and file-sharing communities. The last category is composed by the “Highly connected Millennials” who are the most addicted by social media and actively use blogs. Nielsen researches seem to confirm this theory, in fact it was estimated that among active social media users, 53 % go after a brand instead of actively work to produce some content. These users are defined as “consumer” rather than “contributor” of social media. The usage of social media depends on two class of factors: *environmental* (country economy, technology infrastructures, cultural context, and government policy) and *individual* (socio-economic status, age, personal beliefs). Social media have both favorable and unfavorable effects on young generation. Facebook and the other social networks favor shaping of people’s identities, due to the fact that they allow to share contents, such as opinions, increasing the so called “social capital” (Christofides *et al*, 2012). Through social media, people feel the sense of belonging to a real community (Valkenburg, 2006). On the other hand, there are serious concerns for the long term due to an excessive usage of social media. Although those technological tools are used for purposes as communication and entertainment, and that they can boost social capital, there is a concrete risk that people share an excessive amount of personal information in their pursue of social consensus. In fact, more time is spent online by adolescent and students, more information these people reveal, and this can lead to a distortion of intimate relationship (Christofides *et al*, 2009; Christofides *et al*, 2012), which can alter intimate relationships (Lewis & West, 2009). Moreover stalking, cyberbullying, internet addiction are all other negative possible consequences of a social media utilization.

### 3.4 PERSONALITY TRAITS AND “ACTIVE LEARNING STYLE”

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<sup>1</sup> They encompass user-generated services (such as blogs), social networking sites, online review/rating sites, virtual game worlds, video sharing sites and online communities, whereby consumers produce, design, publish, or edit content (Krishnamurthy and Dou, 2008).

As mentioned, Millennials' common features are (Farrel & Hurt, 2014): *ability to multitask, team oriented ...technologically savvy.*

The Digital Natives generation behave and think differently from their educators, the so called "Digital Immigrants" (Gaston, 2006). Being technology a natural part of the environment (Oblinger, 2003), "Students today have grown up in a highly stimulating and interactive digital environment" (Gaston, 2006, p. 12).

Millennials' features and culture strongly influence Millennials' learning style and are helpful to explain young people learning trends. Common literature frequently characterised Millennials as active learner, sharing the so called: **active learning style. Multitasking** is a real way of living for Millennials (McGlynn, 2005) and it is considered as the main reason for this way of learning.

According to Feiertag and Berge (Farrel & Hurt, 2014), Millennials have a hypertext mind set, since they observe life through **technology**, evidence shows students are continuously influenced by technology and digital media. It means that Millennials learning style doesn't fit with strict teaching methods such as manuals and lecture based lessons but required a dynamic learning format which changes constantly. Millennials are a **team oriented generation**, since their propensity for collaboration and group activities. Wilson and Gerber (2008), consider the most effective learning methods those which comprehend choices and cooperative opportunities, stimulating individual to take their own decisions. This approach stimulates commitment in self-training and in an active learning.

### **3.5 UNDESRTANDING MILLENIALS' EXPECTATION: THE WORKPLACE**

#### **Expectations**

As it was said, Millennials have different features compared to the previous generation and it includes their expectations of the ideal work environment. **Millennials are a dynamic generation, powerful and multitasking, who prefers working in team, being achievement oriented and**

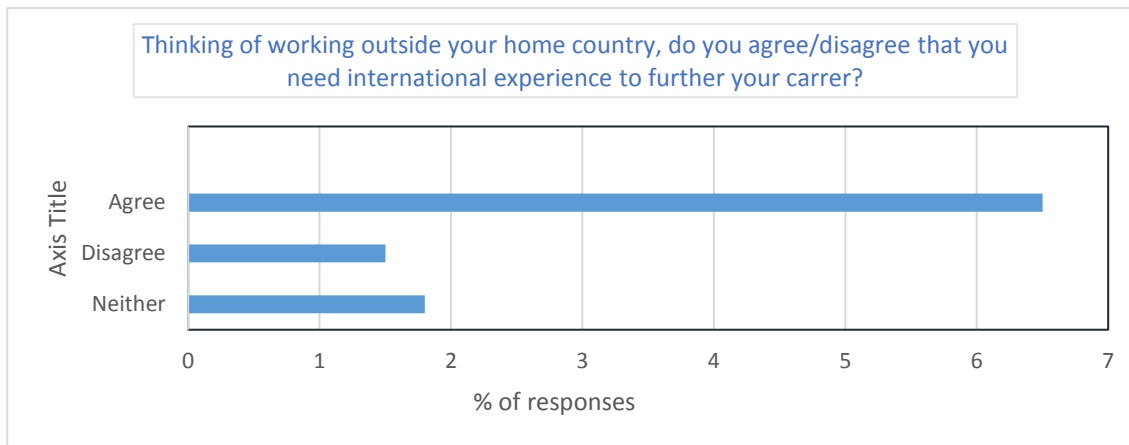
**desiring fast work advancement.** They look for **achievement** through work (Farrell & Hurt, 2014) and contribute tangibly within the organization with a meaningful work. Flexibility of work schedule and variety of the job, in term of responsibilities and projects, fulfill Millennials need of **multitasking**. **Team work** is appreciated by Millennials, because it is perceived as more entertaining and less risky (Alsop, 2008). As it was said, highly adaptable and flexible regarding their jobs, Millennials seek constant **feedback** both positive and negative, with **mentoring support**. They need to be assured and reassured that their actions are effective to reach the organization's goal and it need support and resources by managers.

**Work-life balance** takes on great importance for them and personal lives are consider more valuable than their job. In fact, Work life balance and other off-the-job activities, are means to reach fulfillment and happiness (Farrell and Hurt, 2014)

Although being **skilled** and **well-educated**, they reveal some lacks about **leadership** and **problem solving skills** (Deal *et all*, 2010). Additionally, even though their autonomy and independence, they look for explicit rules and established responsibilities for their task. It indicates that Millennials are looking for a **structured work place environment**.

Millennials' use of **technology** is one the main factor that differentiates them from the previous generations. The affinity with the digital devices such as laptop, smartphones, and social media give them a preferential access to information (PWC, 2011). Moreover this offers them a greater knowledge of the business tools compared to the senior manager.

According to PWC's statistics, **international mobility** rate is soaring among Millennials. Working overseas represents a plus for employees and over half of them are favorable to work in a developing country.



**Chart II: International Mobility (PWC, 2015-2016)**

## Workplace

The authors Singht, Bhandarker and Rai (2012) stated that Millennials are looking for:

- A workplace which incentives **innovation** and freedom for **experimentation**
- Adequate **reward** and **recognition** for their performance and effort
- Learning, growth and **development**
- Fair and transparent **organization**

Outcomes arisen from an interview analysis among a cluster composed by 1000 Millennials with previous work experience, conducted by Singht, Bhandarker and Rai, revealed the most common expectations from this generations. The results are summarized in the table below.

S.No.	I would like to join for	N	%
1.	A platform to grow and actualize myself	92	92,00%
2.	Identity and social status	90	90,00%
3.	Opportunity to experiment and express my creativity	88	88,00%
4.	Money and material comfort	60	60,00%
5.	Meaningful engagement	58	58,00%
6.	Becoming part of a community	51	51,00%
7.	Contributing to society	32	32,00%

8. Sense of security and safety	30	30,00%
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**Table II: Millennials' workplace expectations** (Singht, Bhandarker, Rai 2012)

The most cited item is “a platform to grow and actualize myself” (92%). This is explainable by the fact that young generation want workplace that boost learning and provide opportunity for personal development. It demonstrates their high self-orientation. This is followed by “identity and social status” (90%) and “opportunity to experiment and express my creativity” (88%). In fact Millennials desire is to develop a strong personal identity, having the opportunity to express their own ideas. “Money and material comfort” (60%) and “meaningful engagement” (58%), are certainly considered fundamental for a workplace which recognize but also incentive individual performance and contribution. The last three items are the less mentioned but are relevant to show how Millennials have ethical needs and care about community development.

## **4. HR MANAGEMENT AND MILLENNIALS**

### **4.1 HOW TO LEAD MILLENNIALS: HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES**

Since Millennials have been coming the dominant generation in the workplace culture, employees' attitudes and behaviours are changing, not following anymore the traditional patterns. Human resources management need to embrace this change, approaching to Millennials on their own terms (Garcia, 2016). “It is important to consider how your company will embrace, manage, promote and retain these new highly technical workers” (Burgess, 2016). Organizations need to invest in human resource practices, especially in new techniques for attracting, hiring, motivating, managing and retaining young talents (Wood, 2015).

### **4.2 IDEAL WORKPLACE TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN TALENTS**

“The ability to attract and retain talent is rapidly becoming one of the key issues for human resource managers and their organizations across the globe” (Hiltrop, 1999). Pursuit of the best talents in the market is doubtless strategic for companies to remain competitive. Nowadays, the real challenge for

companies is to create attracting and retain strategies that will appeal to Millennials (Earle, 2016). Often, employers don't understand that Millennials have different characteristic compared to the previous generation (Sims, Ronald, Sauser and William, 2012) and that is fundament using a different approach toward them. In fact, it is not sufficient anymore “**a well-respected strong brand**” (Hatum, 2013, p. 63) to attract top performers among Millennials since they want both to be appreciate for their work and stay in a cool place (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009) as well. There is not a universal and objective definition of cool place to work, but the recent literature provided several theories about how employers need to act in order to make their companies the most attractive place to work. According to the Employee Value Proposition theories, employers need to provide a satisfactory offer to employees in exchange for their skills, experiences and capabilities in order to target the top performers. EVP is composed by several pilasters related to characteristics that each organization need to enhance his attractiveness: culture, work, rewards... (Hatum, 2010). Firstly, a flexible organizational **culture** is required in order to attract multigenerational workers (Eversole, Venneberg & Crowder 2012). In fact, companies need to embrace flexibility, in terms of work scheduling and location. According to Eversole, Venneberg and Crowder, (2012) flexibility refers to adaptable **work** schedule, part-time, leaves of absence for family needs or other reasons, job sharing and retirement programs. It is achievable by “Forget the 9 to 5 schedule<sup>2</sup>” (Grodén, 2016), allowing employees to work remotely<sup>3</sup>. Companies should address a real cultural change to promote family-friendly issues as flexibility, balance, respect and time, (Bankert & Googins, 1996). According to Sims; Ronald, Sauser and William (2012), technological advancement has developed a connected environment where Millennials are empowered to switch between professional and personal life being satisfied and motivated in their work-place. This Combination mixes up work and life priorities for young generations. According to EY's survey 2014, the main reasons why people among Millennials generation quit their jobs are: *inflexible work environment, excessive*

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<sup>2</sup> “9 to 5 schedule” refers to a typical working day from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

<sup>3</sup> Remotely means working from home



*hour's workload, minimal wage growth, lack of growing opportunities.* Most of the studies relates young employee's satisfaction with *training programs, short-term feedbacks and perks (rewards).* Companies need to create a work environment based on "web based", "Millennials are not afraid to disrupt themselves to get that growth and development" (Grodén, 2016). Additionally, these employees desire to be acknowledgeable of their progress and be guide in their personal development by senior managers Fringe benefits are an important driver of companies' offer to attract Millennials, but compared to Generation X which significantly values compensation, Millennials satisfaction is mostly determined by support and supervision of the organizations (Grodén, 2016).

#### **4.3 HIRING MILLENNIALS: RECRUITING STRATEGIES**

As it was said, Millennials represent a challenge to employers since they have different set of values and "recruiting them to join your company requires a different approach" (Abbot, 2015). In the digital era, traditional recruitment systems have been replaced by online recruiting tools. In order to adapt to "Digital Natives", organizations have been changing their traditional recruiting tools.

According to Abbot, 2015, even if Millennials are satisfied with their jobs they are always open to new jobs opportunity since they are interested to talk with recruiters, continuously updating their resume or LinkedIn profile, and searching for job opportunities. The author stated that they mostly use company website, social professional networks and online jobs boards to look for a job. Based on the above mentioned preferences and other interests, there are several suggested strategies to recruit Millennials:

**Engagement with Social Media.** Due to the Millennials' computer-related skills and their interest, Web-based recruitment seems to best fits with this people. (Alsop, 2008). Actually 94% of recruiters use social media to plan recruiting (Montini, 2014). LinkedIn has 40% of Market share of U.S online job seekers (Montini, 2014), since it allows a fast and focus research of the ideal candidate for a job position (Vivas, 2015)

**Dedicated message to potential candidates.** HR managers need to send a clear message to potential candidate, highlighting three main factors: job responsibilities, reason for choosing them as candidates and the salary range (Abbot, 2015)

**Differentiation factor.** In order to appeal to potential employees, employers need to show that the company keep up with competitors, offering higher compensation, professional development and more opportunities for advancement.

**Positive interview experience.** According to Abbot, 2015, the interview experience, including having all question answered and receiving feedbacks, consistently influences Millennials in considering the job offer. 73% of Millennials said they are comfortable following up with a potential employer after an interview (Refresh Leadership, 2016).

#### **4.4 TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS: INFORMAL LEARNING**

“If organization are going to be successful in effectively managing the transition between members of the baby boomers generation and millennial generations, a deeper understanding of the training and design performance are necessary” (Farrel&Hurt, 2014, p. 47). As mentioned, Millennials are active learners, achievement-oriented and highly educated (Brack, 2012) and these features drive their workplace preferences. A clear understanding of training preferences among employees is fundamental in order to build an environment compatible with multiple generations (Farrel & Hurt, 2014). In the previous paragraph, it was mentioned about learning style characteristics of Millennials, since these are strategic to design effective training and developing programs.

According to Sharma (2016), companies need to abandon the formal learning and prioritizing just in time sources in order to access to knowledge. Being the technological savvy generation, who relies on real time information through internet and social networks, organizations need to implement **technology based learning activities** that favors continuous learning approach (Farrel and Hurt, 2014; Sharma, 2016). Moreover Sharma suggests that organizations need to endorse **informal learning** compared to formal due to the fact that it allow to assimilate tacit information within the

organizations and it brings learning closer to employee and not vice versa, for a pull versus push effect. The author suggested several methods to foster informal learning within the organizations:

***Collaborative learning:*** Millennials' reliance on technology, such as social networks and media tools, is helpful in order to develop a learning environment to share ideas and create interaction within the organizations. According to Training Industry, collaborative learning is defined as a process where two or more individuals obtain knowledge in group, without the supervision of an instructor. It is a dynamic process through online collaboration which is strategic for creating a community environment, developing an open workforce, favors cross functional teaching and inspire participation among employees.

***Gamification:*** Game approaches popularity is spreading in education as mean to have fun and to “educate individuals in a specific content domain” (Kapp, 2012). Showing challenges and hypothetical situations that an employee typically faces on the job (Sharma, 2016), this method allows them to fail in a risk free setting and encourage out of the box thinking. “Game based techniques have the power to engage, inform and educate” with the purpose of boosting employees performance and their investment of brain share energy and time (Kapp, 2012).

***Micro learning:*** “Micro learning is defined as short learning experience, composed of small bit-sized learning units and activities” (Donahue, 2016). It encompasses online research of topics and customized digital libraries delivered through videos and social apps (Fox, 2016). The bite-size learning resources are easily manageable (Sharma, 2016), and assure always updated topics. This format of short and fast lessons increases engagement and retention of learner (Donahue, 2016) and it is strategic to easily explain a product or a process to employees.

#### **4.5 MENTORING APPROACHES**

Connor and Pokora, 2012, stated that mentoring is fundamental for people to take charge of their development, release their potential and obtain results they value. Nowadays mentoring and

coaching have great importance in the organizations due to fact they are **means of growth and learning opportunities**. Defined as “attention sponges”, Millennials look for road maps that drive them to success (Meister and Willyerd, 2010). Mentors are person who guide employees in their performance and career development (Stack, 2011), helping them with constant feedback and attention. Millennials desire feedbacks but also communication with their mentors, who need to provide challenges and out of the box projects (Sharma, 2014) in order to train them to be future leaders. “Mentoring is an affordable, creative and smart tool to prepare Millennials for future leadership roles” (Lindenberg, 2016). According to Meister and Willyerd (2010), there are several effective methods for mentoring millennial generation within the organization:

***One to one mentoring:*** Dyadic mentoring is the traditional method where one mentor is matched with one mentee. Usually this match is driven by affinity of interests, skills and goals between mentor and mentee. Millennials always seek structure and stability, so mentoring should include regular meeting and consistent communication. The major benefit of using this kind of approach is that the form of one-to one match make Millennials more comfortable.

***Group mentoring:*** As much as dyadic (one-to one) mentoring experiences, group mentoring has been used for long in learning and growth of individuals within the organization (Kroll, 2016). It can be power distributed, being peer to peer where each member has leadership and mentoring responsibilities, or led by a senior managers (Meister and Willyerd, 2010; Kroll 2016). In both the previous cases, electronic communication platforms is useful for employees to delimit the ideal characteristics of the mentoring. The advantage of using an online platform is that a single mentor is able to train different mentees at the same time. In this way, Millennials are able to interact with peers or to receive support from a senior manager (Lindenberg, 2016).

***Mentoring with micro feedback:*** Micro feedback is a tool for performance assessment created with a minimal amount of resources. Creating an on-demand assessment feedback, as instant messaging and texting allow managers to give fast and useful feedback to employees. On the other side, it

allows employees to receive feedback from several people inside the companies (Meister and Willyerd, 2010).

**Reverse mentoring** is a method that organizations use to optimize and improve mentoring and coaching of Millennials. “Reverse mentoring is an innovative way to encourage learning and facilitate cross-generational relationships” and useful to build a bridge between generations (Murphy, 2012). Compared to traditional mentoring where junior employees learn from their supervisor, with reverse mentoring assignee each millennials to a senior executive to teach how to use social media, showing new concepts and market trend (Chen, 2010; Meister and Willyerd, 2010). This method has many potential benefits such as keep younger employee engaged, revitalise senior executives and consequently improve relationships between generations within the organization (Chen, 2010).

#### **4.6 MANAGAMENT OF GENERATIONAL DIVERSITY IN THE ORGANIZATION**

Historically, it is the first time that the modern workplace is composed by four different generations of workers: Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y (Kapoor; Solomon, 2011) and “this created a new challenge for employers”. As mentioned, each generation was influenced by historical, economic, social and cultural experiences and this shaped their personality. A great variety of values, views, ambitions arise from the fact that different generations need to coexist in the same workplace. According to Taylor (2014), leaders can make multigenerational workforce productive and efficient, focusing on three key aspects: *communication style, negative stereotypes and cultural expectations*. While older generations consider formal communication as a form of respect towards employers, preferring traditional communication methods as phone call and emails. Millennials use to informal language to communicate for instance abbreviations, adopting instant messaging and text messaging. In order to have an effective communication in the workplace, employers need to use methods a communication style which fits with employees features. Millennials are labelled are lazy, self-entitled and tech addicted. According to the

Guardian, “ Millennials set the bar too high because of a sense of entitlement” and “ ... recent study showed that 40% believe they should be promoted every two years, regardless of performance” (Stein, 2013). Stereotypes and judgments are widely diffused and accepted in the organizations, especially ageist classification.

**For this reasons, managers need not to encourage false myths and baseless stereotypes which damage organization’s wellbeing. According to Kriegel (2016), it is essential to enhance awareness of stereotype discrimination and “gently confront coworkers who treat employees differently based on the age”. Understanding and leveraging generational diversity is the key for organizational success, since it allows to gain on a wide range of skills, attitudes and values at work. (Kelly Services, 2009)**

According to Taylor (2014), older generations evaluate performance based on quantitative scale such as hours spent in the office. On the contrary, Millennials use to prefer a qualitative approach where the kind of result and goal achieve counts. While Baby boomers and Xers made a lot of sacrifice for the jobs, Millennials have seen their parents loosing job even their loyalty toward the companies and they are not willing to renounce to their work life balance for them. In this context, cultural expectations are fundamental for leaders to detect working style which best fit to each employee in order to achieve their goals (Taylor, 2014).

To sum up, the real challenge for leadership is to manage **generational gap** within organizations. Culture and historical events have shaped the way each of the four generations approach to work. According to Miller (2014), employers need to “keep employee connected and engaged, create mentoring opportunities and manage internal conflicts”. In fact employees need to be aware of how they contribute to organizational goals. As mentioned mentoring is essential within the organization especially between young and old workers who can learn from each other’s. “Effective leaders help teams work through their differences and understand that everyone has something valuable to bring

to the table”, transforming eventual tensions and conflicts in collaboration and innovation (Miller, 2014).

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Generation Y is the **youngest generation** in the mkt place. Due to its dramatic rate of growth, in 2015 it became the **largest generation** in the United States work-force (Pew Research Center, 2015). This rise has changed **human resource management goals** in the organizations, highlighting the need of **dedicated practices**.

Millennials present **contradictory** characteristic and features. While, some authors described them as optimistic, civic minded and educated (DeVaney, 2015, p13), instead they are labeled as selfish, excessively self-confident and unfaithful (Marston, 2009) by others.

**Technology** is a real symbol of generational identification for Millennials, and it characterizes the main aspects of their lives (Pew Research Center, 2010). Being a multitasking, extremely technological and team oriented generation, we can conclude that the most effective learning methods are those which comprehend choices and cooperative opportunities (Wilson & Gerber, 2008). Highly adaptable and flexible regarding their jobs, Millennials seek constant **feedbacks** both positive and negative, with significant **mentoring** support. This confirm our assumption that they are a contradictory generation, being highly self-confident, at the same insecure, constantly looking forward mentoring and feedbacks.

Work expectations are driven by attitudes and personality, in fact being highly **self-oriented** Millennials’ main concern is find a path to grow and realize their self (Singht, Bhandarker, Rai 2012).

The secret to engage Millennials is creating a work environment based on development culture (Grodén, 2016), focusing on flexibility, balanced workload with adequate wages and growth opportunities (EY, 2014).

Being Millennials defined as “Net Generation”, recruiting strategies need to encompass web based methods and **social media**, being the most effective method to appeal to them. Moreover it was demonstrated that technology enhance learning and development within the organizations, so managers need to promote technology based learning activities in order to favor **continuous learning** (Farrel and Hurt, 2014; Sharma, 2016).

Among all the hr practices, mentoring is fundamental since it is the answer to Millennials’ desire of feedback and stability. Reverse mentoring is the evidence that hr practices are able to boost **cross generational relationships**, reducing generational gap. Human resource management is a real bridge between generations and if it is designed effectively it will reduce distances among generations.



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